

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1107

By Johnson P

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Sergeant James Kevin Downs for his meritorious military service.

WHEREAS, our nation was conceived by individuals who were willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure our individual and collective freedom, and Tennessee is especially proud to be the home of so many valiant men and women who have performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, many fine and honorable traditions have arisen from the deep wellspring of honor and bravery possessed by Tennesseans, but there is no finer tradition than that which gave Tennessee its nickname; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of the "Volunteer State" have, throughout the years, willingly forsaken the comforts and securities of inaction by taking up arms against the enemies of this great Nation, risking their lives and leaving their loved ones behind to honorably safeguard the freedoms and liberties guaranteed to all citizens of these United States and vanquishing those who threaten our way of life; and

WHEREAS, thousands of Tennesseans continue this time-honored tradition of volunteerism through service in the Tennessee National Guard; and

WHEREAS, established in 1887 by an act of the 45th General Assembly, the Tennessee National Guard is a dedicated collection of the finest men and women this State has to offer. Always vigilant and prepared for duty, the Tennessee National Guard has proven time and again its ability to protect fellow Tennesseans and Americans and those around the world in need of aid; and

WHEREAS, the members of the Tennessee National Guard selflessly serve with courage and gallantry and deserve to be recognized for heroism in the line of duty and model citizenship in our American society; and

WHEREAS, one such Guardsman is Sergeant James Kevin Downs, distinguished officer with the 2nd Squadron, 278th Regimental Combat Team, whose accomplishments while serving as an M-249/M-240 Machine Gunner during Operation Iraqi Freedom III reflect great credit upon him, the 278th Regimental Combat Team, and the United States Army; and

WHEREAS, a native of Kingston Springs, Tennessee, where his heroism is lauded, James Kevin Downs is the son of Joseph W. Downs and the late Ruby M. Downs; he attended Harpeth High School in Kingston Springs, where he played football, ran track, and, following graduation, assisted with the Harpeth High School football team; and

WHEREAS, Sgt. Downs enjoys sports of all kinds, particularly fishing, and is an avid Dallas Cowboys fan; possessing a strong affinity for Corvettes, he is a lifetime member of the illustrious Texas Corvette Club; and

WHEREAS, on November 14, 2002, high school senior Kevin Downs enlisted in the Tennessee Army National Guard, Company M 3/278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, in Ashland City, Tennessee; after graduation, he worked for Federal Express until September 26, 2003, when he reported to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training, during which he received certification as an M1 Abrams Armor Crewman; and

WHEREAS, Private Downs was considered Title 10, Active Duty when he reported to Camp Shelby, Mississippi, for Advanced Training for Support Contingency, Operation Iraqi Freedom III, on September 27, 2004; and

WHEREAS, Specialist Downs completed a regimen desert training with an infantry unit in Afghanistan in May of 2005, and two weeks later he was transferred with his regiment to a Forward Operating Base in Iraq as a Tank Crew Member; and

WHEREAS, on August 14, 2005, near the city of Tuz in northeastern Iraq, the Humvee in which Spec. Downs was traveling with three others was struck by four explosive devices; the other three soldiers were killed, and a critically injured Spec. Downs was first evacuated to a hospital in Germany, then transferred to a burn unit at a hospital in San Antonio, Texas; and

WHEREAS, during his distinguished tenure with the Tennessee Army Guard, Spec. Downs completed more than 200 combat patrol missions, logged more than 8,000 miles, and seized several weapons caches; on September 1, 2005, the Secretary of Army awarded the Army Commendation medal to Spec. Downs for exceptional performance while serving as an M-249/M-240 Machine Gunner during Operation Iraqi Freedom III; and

WHEREAS, Specialist Downs was promoted to Sergeant by Major General Gus L. Hargett, Jr., the Adjutant General, while bravely recuperating at the Brooke Army Medical Center in Fort Sam Houston; and

WHEREAS, he has unselfishly paid the price of freedom for his friends, family, and all of us as he sacrificed his time, safety, and personal desires; when war disrupted the peace and prosperity of American life, Sgt. Kevin Downs entered the fray on our behalf, boldly and without hesitation or complaint, just as he had left behind the enduring warmth of family and home; and

WHEREAS, as Sgt. Downs fights to recover from his war injuries, we honor the true spirit of his heartfelt and courageous service, which stands as an enduring example of all the characteristics that have ensured the continued freedom of our nation and the preservation of its ideals over the course of our history; and

WHEREAS, a local hero in Kingston Springs, Sgt. James Kevin Downs has served with courage and gallantry and deserves proper recognition for the heroism he exhibited in Iraq and continues to exhibit in society today; and

WHEREAS, though we cannot adequately express our appreciation to Sgt. Downs, who has engaged in preserving the blessed freedom that is inseparable from our American heritage and ideals, it is most appropriate that we should honor him to the full extent of our ability, as he has made untold and innumerable sacrifices to preserve the liberties we enjoy today and that our progeny will hopefully continue to cherish for generations to come; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby recognize and honor Sergeant James Kevin Downs for his gallant and meritorious military service in Iraq, commend his commitment and dedication to the

venerable principles of this great Nation, and offer our deepest wishes for his every future success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.